

Sovereignty could mean 'common tenure'

By Brett White

JUST recently I went into the Hawaiian Homelands of Waimanalo to do a "right meets left" interview with the leader of the Ohana Council of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Dennis Kanahele.

I came out of the tract house suburbs with more than just two hours of taped conversations; I left with an education and an ally.

Most of you probably remember Kanahele as a player in the June 1992 drama at Iolani Palace. You may recall the land monopolists' lackeys perched with binoculars on the veranda of the Hawaii Supreme Court, watching as the rightful owners of the palace grounds were "peacefully arrested" and charged with trespassing. A star was born that day; neither Dennis "Bumpy" Kanahele, nor Hawaii, would ever be exactly the same again.

On my sojourn to the Kanahele "base camp" I expected to encounter a revolutionary who would strike me as a Lenin or a Trotsky. What I found was a man more akin to Che Guevara.

Bare chested, ornate tattoos where shirt sleeves might have been, he is given to hugging rather than shaking hands. The sovereignty activist is intense, but too warm to be intimidating.

The Ohana Council headquarters — equipped with the best computers and fax machines — is also Kanahele's house. The atmosphere is not electric, but it is busy and it is focused. It is Hawaiian and it is high-tech and it is, somehow, just the way it seems it should be. A comfortable place from which to launch a pro-working-class revolt against the enemies of the

people. Surrounded by "office staff," we began to chat.

(Local idioms and expletives used by both of us are deleted here.)

Q: Can we talk in private?

A: We are in private. Ohana is family and

there are no secrets. Say what you want to say.

Q: Are Republican politicians any different than Democrats?

A: You say so. They are all just politicians to me.

Q: How does it feel to have what you say is "your land" stolen from you?

A: It feels bad. It makes me sad.

Q: Does it make you angry?

A: It used to make me angry. Now it just makes me want to educate people. It makes me feel like education is the way to get our land back.

Q: Do all of the governments of Hawaii — and all of the politicians — get their power from the "stolen" land base?

A: Without the stolen land they control they would have no power at all. When the land is returned to the people, the people will have the power again.

Q: The Ohana Council promotes "common tenure" of the land. Does that mean that nonHawaiians will also "own" the land?

A: Everybody will own the land. If you say you are Hawaiian, you are ohana. If you want to be here, you are welcome to be here and to live under the laws of the Hawaiian nation.

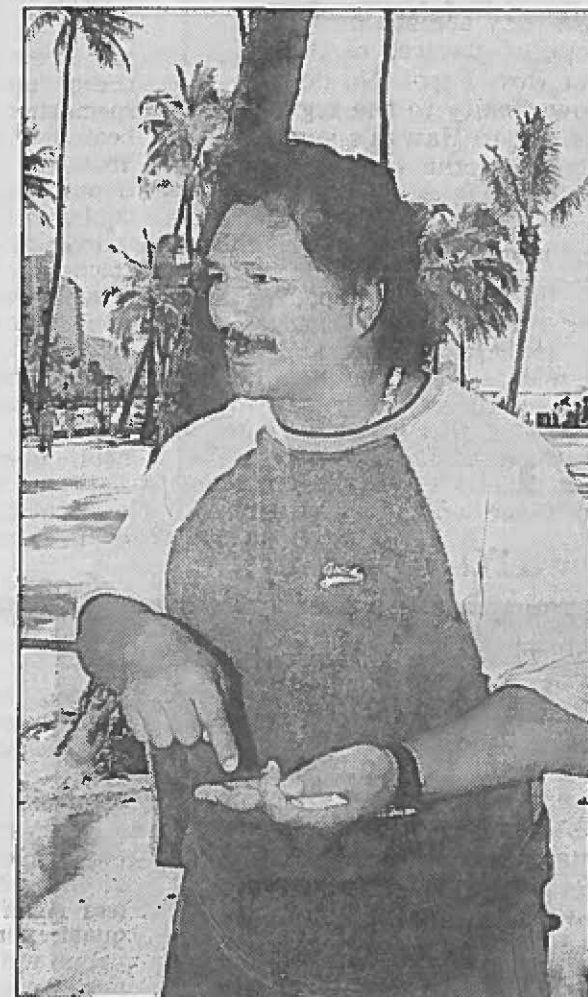
Q: What about all the folks who think you want to "take away" the land they feel they bought fair and square?

A: Buying stolen land is not fair and square. No one who lives on the land will be thrown off when the land is returned. The real owners of the land will receive compensation, and the sovereign government will collect taxes on the land. We will change who shares the benefits of the land. The government you say is controlled by the "land monopolists" will no longer benefit. No good person can be hurt. It's not the Hawaiian way.

Q: Are you a militant kind of guy?

A: When the brothers come out of prison they are militant. You know we have too many of us in prison. No chance, no fairness, no land, just corporate state justice. Recently, I met with some "militants" and they said: "Bumpy, we know you are at least 3 percent warrior inside and we need you as a warrior."

I told them, "You take care of the 3 percent warrior for me because I am going to be 100 percent aloha on the table." We can only win without anger.



Dennis "Bumpy" Kanahele

Q: Do you and I have a common enemy?

A: (Laughter.) I've been waiting for you to say that. When everybody — pretty soon — sees that, the bad guys will start to fall fast. We have to get together and see that your enemy is our enemy. Common tenure is the way to beat our common enemy.

Q: Do you think any of the current crop of politicians are going to buy into your argument (that the land issue must be addressed before other problems can be resolved)?

A: Yes. It's about justice and votes. We'll

work to register thousands of new voters. We'll get them to the polls on election day. When the politicians see we have the voters, they will come our way."

After some self-effacing comments about his literacy and language skills, Kanahele gave me an hour of "education."

This kind-spirited teacher did not change my mind about anything; I have wanted to "give the land back" since I was 10 years old and the manager of a big Waikiki hotel told me that I was welcome to swim in the hotel pool as long as I did not bring my "local" friends.

But I did learn "for sure" that, according to all of the records that are available for us to review, the land of Hawaii was stolen from its rightful owners: the people of the sovereign and independent nation of Hawaii. The United Nations says it is so, numerous U.S. presidents have admitted it. And I believe it is so.

How could America have done this, and how can Americans who now know the truth fail to right the wrong?

If any foreign power moved against any third-world country and today committed and sustained the acts done against the Hawaiian nation by America, the full force of America's military would be deployed to liberate the victim nation. Hawaii is not Haiti or Somalia, but its government was overthrown and its people are now oppressed.

All of Hawaii's Republicans and right-thinking Democrats should embrace the concepts advanced by Kanahele and the Ohana Council. The core of Hawaii's governmental apple is rotten and it cannot be replanted — not by failed Democrats born of the sparrow, and not by earnest Republicans reformed of the luna — in an orchard long corrupted by theft.

The planting field must be returned to its rightful caretakers.

All straight-thinking politicians and fair-minded citizens should realize that the promoters of common tenure have identified our common enemy. Action on that realization must come soon if paradise is to keep the promise of its name.

□

Brett White is a conservative political activist and writer living in Honolulu.